

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 DRC-01 /126 W

----- 050403

R 190745Z OCT 73

FM AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1828

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMCONSUL SYDNEY

AMCONSUL BRISBANE

AMCONSUL PERTH

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MELBOURNE 1079

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, AS

SUBJECT: SPECULATION ON EARLY AUSTRALIAN ELECTIONS

REFS: CANBERRA'S 5521, 5652 AND 5655; MELBOURNE 1053

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: AS OF NOW, SPLIT VIEWS OF POLITICIANS IN FEDERAL SPHERE IN THIS CONSULAR DISTRICT WOULD BEAR OUT REFTELS VIEWS THAT DOUBLE DISSOLUTION AND FEDERAL ELECTIONS UNLIKELY BEFORE NEXT MARCH/APRIL. LABOR PARTY MEN HERE FEEL SHORT TERM TREND NOW ADVERSE TO PARTY AFTER PARAMATTA AND GREENSBOROUGH BY-ELECTIONS, AND NEED TIME TO IMPROVE ALP IMAGE AS WELL AS TIME FOR ALP FEDERAL ELECTIONEERING ORGANIZATION TO BE "RETOOLED". LIBERAL PARTY LEADERS HERE SPLIT

WITH PRESENT MAJORITY FAVORING "GIVE ALP MORE ROPE" UNTIL NEXT YEAR BUT STRONG LIBERAL PARTY MINORITY ARGUING THAT "IT'S TIME" WHEN OPPORTUNITY FOR LIBERALS AND ALLIES IS AT PEAK IN NOVEMBER TO BRING MATTER TO A HEAD IN THE FEDERAL PARLIAMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. LABOR PARTY LEADERS HERE LAY BLAME FOR BAD ALP IMAGE WITH
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ELECTORATES IN GENERAL AND PARRAMATTA AND GREENSBOROUGH

IN PARTICULAR, TO (A) LACK OF COMMUNICATION WITHIN ALP, (B) LACK OF POLITICAL SAVVY BY A FEW MINISTERS, AND (C) THE DISSOLUTION OF THE EFFECTIVE DECEMBER 1972 CAMPAIGN ORGANIZATION OF THE ALP. THEY PROPOSE TO TAKE IMMEDIATE STEPS IN CONSULTATION WITH WHITLAM, THE CAUCUS AND VARIOUS FACTIONS OF THE PARTY TO RE-ESTABLISH THEIR "CAMPAIGN" ORGANIZATION IN THE NEW FORM OF SPECIAL ADVISORS AND "TROUBLE SHOOTERS" FOR PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM. THEY HOPE TO BRING BACK MICK YOUNG AS KEY TROUBLE SHOOTER. YOUNG HAS BEEN TAKING IT FAIRLY EASY RECENTLY WITH TRIPS ABROAD AND HAS RECENTLY RETURNED FROM CHINA WITH WHAT IS REPORTED TO BE A MILD CASE OF THE GOUT "DUE TO CHINESE WINING AND DINING PROCLIVITIES". LABOR PARTY NOTABLES HERE ARE NOT INCLINED TO FORECAST A DATE OF POSSIBLE DOUBLE DISSOLUTION, BUT IMPLY THAT IT WOULD BE NO EARLIER THAN NEXT APRIL OR MAY WITH A POSSIBILITY OF DELAYING IT UNTIL AFTER THE EENATE ELECTIONS IF THE FINAL DECISION IS LEFT TOTHE ALP.

3. LIBERAL PARTY REPRESENTATIVES HERE, INCLUDING BEHIND THE THRONE STRATEGISTS, IN GENERAL FAVOR LETTING THE ALP IMAGE FURTHER DETERIORATE UNTIL NEXT APRIL WHEN A SUPPLY BILL WILL PROVIDE THE EXPECTED OPPORTUNITY TO FORCE THE GOA TO CALL FOR A DOUBLE DISSOLUTION. LIBERALS ARGUE THAT KEY ISSUES OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENSE, INFLATION AND SOCIALIZATION OF THE AUSTRALIAN ECONOMY ARE BOUND TO MAKE MATTERS WORSE FOR THE ALP IN THE NEXT FIVE OR SIX MONTHS. MAJORITY OF LIBERALS ALSO FAVOR APRIL ELECTION DATE BECAUSE OF FEAR THAT SNEDDEN MIGHT NOT BE THE MAN TO LEAD THEM INTO THE NEXT FIDERAL BATTLE.

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AMCONSUL BRISBANE

AMCONSUL PERTH

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 MELBOURNE 1079

4. A STRONG MINDED MINORITY AMONG LIBERALS IN THIS DISTRICT ARE ARGUING THAT (A) NOW IS THE TIME TO STRIKE AND ONE SHOULD NOT WORRY PRO OR CON ABOUT SNEDDEN'S LEADERSHIP CAPABILITIES, (B) THE FEDERAL LABOR GOVERNMENT WOULD NORMALLY BE ABLE TO EXPECT AN EASING IN INFLATIONARY TRENDS IN MARCH OR APRIL AS IS CUSTOMARY EACH YEAR, (C) THE ALP WILL FURTHER ENTRENCH ITSELF WITH "HANDOUTS" AND PLACING MEN IN KEY PLACES IN "SOCIALIST MOVES AND ACTIONS" WHICH CANNOT BE EASILY UNDONE, AND (D) THE TIME TO STRIKE IS IN NOVEMBER WHICH WILL BE THE NEXT OPPORTUNITY FOR FORCING THE GOVERNMENT TO DOUBLE DISSOLUTION IN PARLIAMENTARY ACTION ON BUDGET AND FINANCIAL MATTERS. MINORITY ARGUES THAT "MURPHY'S FBI MEASURES" WILL NOT GO THROUGH THE SENATE AND THEREBY WILL CREATE A CLIMATE MORE FAVORABLE TO THEIR POSITION BEFORE END OF YEAR. MINORITY ALSO ARGUES THAT EARLY ELECTIONS WOULD EXPECT TO BRING TO THE LIBERAL PARTY AND ITS ALLIES FOUR ADDITIONAL SEATS IN VICTORIA, TWO IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA AND THREE IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

5. DEMOCRATIC LABOR PARTY DOES NOT FAVOR EARLY DOUBLE DISSOLUTION BECAUES IT WOULD LOSE TWO OR THREE SEATS.
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MINORITY LIBERAL STRATEGIES IN VICTORIA ARE TALKING WITH DLP AND TRYING TO CONVINCE THEM THAT A "UNITY TICKET" OF THE COMBINED OPPOSITION, WHICH WOULD RETURN ALL YYTTINLW MEMBERS TO THEIR PRESENT SEATS, IS IN THEIR COMMON PARTY AND NATIONAL INTERESTS. THIS MINORITY LIBERAL GROUP THEN PLANS TO PRESS FURTHER FOR LIBERAL PARTY DECISION ON NOVEMBER ACTION TO FORCE GENERAL ELECTIONS BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR.

6. COMMENT: WE FEEL THAT THE LIBERAL MINORITY GROUP IS UNLIKELY TO SUCCEED BECAUSE THEIR PROBLEM OF THE SNEDDEN LEADERSHIP IS NOT EASILY RESOLVED QUICKLY, AND BECAUSE THIS WOULD BRING ELECTIONS IN THE SACROSANCT SUMMER HOLIDAYS.

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